

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for differentiating an item from a stack of items supported on a surface, said surface having a slot therein, extending at least across the base of said stack, said apparatus comprising:

a) a drive means including a shaft member ~~means~~ adapted to be received in a guide means, said shaft member ~~means~~ mounted under said surface, with respect to said stack of items and aligned with said slot in said surface;

b) a base member connected to ~~and a guide means/~~ said guide means ~~connected to said base member~~ and adapted for receiving said shaft member ~~means/ and for~~ carrying said base member along said shaft member ~~means~~;

c) a head member and a mounting means for mounting said head member on said base member, said mounting means providing for pivotal movement of said head member about ~~on~~ said mounting means; and

d) a bias means coupled between said base member and said head member for urging said head member into an angular orientation with respect to said

surface, said head member positioned on said base member for extending into said slot in said surface ~~At least~~ when said head member is in said angular orientation.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for differentiating an item from a stack of items as in Claim 1 wherein said shaft member is a threaded shaft and ~~threads of~~ said threaded shaft includes ~~are~~ dual threads defining a section on said shaft member with turn-around threads at each end of said section.

8. (Original) An apparatus for differentiating an item from a stack of items as in Claim 1 wherein

said drive means is a rotational drive means.

9.(Original) An apparatus for differentiating an item from a stack of items as in Claim 7 wherein said drive means is an unidirectional drive means.

10.(Currently Amended) An apparatus for differentiating an item from a stack of items as in Claim 7 and further including thread follower means coupled to said base member and adapted to receive and ride in a thread of said dual threads of said threaded shaft ~~means~~ for moving said base member along said threaded shaft.

11.(Currently Amended) An apparatus for differentiating an item from a stack of items ~~as in Claim 1 and in which~~ supported on a surface, said surface having a slot therein, extending at least across the base of said stack, said apparatus comprising:

a) a drive means including a shaft member adapted to be received in a guide means, said shaft member mounted under said surface, with respect to said stack of items and aligned with said slot in said surface;

b) a base member connected to said guide means and adapted for receiving said shaft member for carrying said base member along said shaft member;

c) a head member and a mounting means for mounting said head member on said base member, said mounting means providing for pivotal movement of said head member about said mounting means;

d) a bias means coupled between said base member and said head member for pivotally urging said head member into an angular orientation with respect to said surface, said head member positioned on said base member for extending into said slot in said surface when said head member is in said angular orientation and said base member ~~includes~~ includes an adjustable means between said base member and said head member for limiting the maximum extent of angular orientation to which said head member may be urged by said bias means.

12.(Original) An apparatus for differentiating an item from a stack of items as in Claim 11 and in which said adjustable means is a screw means threaded into a threaded hole in said base member.

13.(Original) An apparatus for differentiating

an item from a stack of items as in Claim 11 wherein said head member is defined by a substantially straight body with a first end and a second end and said first end includes a facing means which is at an acute angle to said body and extends above said surface when said head member is urged into maximum angular orientation.

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for differentiating an item from ~~of~~ a stack of items as in Claim 11 wherein said head member is defined by an angular body with a first end and a second end and said first end includes a facing means which is substantially at normal to said angular body and said first end extends above said surface when said head member is urged into maximum angular orientation.

15. (Currently Amended) A differentiating system for a vending machine having a stack of items supported on a support surface with a slot in the support surface extending across said stack of items where a differentiator of said differentiating system separates items one at a time from said stack of items and delivers the separated item to a

dispensing area of the vending machine, said differentiating system comprising:

a) a drive means and a threaded shaft member, said threaded shaft member connected to said drive means for rotating said threaded shaft member on a major axis, said threaded shaft member mounted under said support surface, with respect to said stack of items and in alignment with said slot in said support surface, said threaded shaft member adapted to be received in a port means;

b) a differentiator means defined by a base member, a head member, a mounting means, a bias means and a means for stabilizing said base member, said base member including said ~~/~~ port means and a thread follower means, said port means adapted for receiving said threaded shaft member for mounting said differentiator means under said support surface and said thread follower means adapted for cooperating with threads of said threaded shaft for moving said differentiator means along said threaded shaft means when said threaded shaft is rotated, said means for stabilizing said base for preventing rotation of said base member with said threaded shaft member, said mounting means for mounting said head member on said base member for rotational

movement of said head member on said mounting means and said bias means connected between said base member and said head member for urging said head member to an angular orientation with respect to said support surface; and,

c) said threaded shaft member received in said port of said base member for positioning said head member mounted on said base member in said slot of said support surface so that a first end of said head member extends through said slot when said head member is urged into angular orientation by said bias means.

16. (Currently Amended) A differentiating system for a vending machine ~~As in claim 15 wherein~~ having a stack of items supported on a support surface with a slot in the support surface extending across said stack of items where a differentiator of said differentiating system separates items, one at a time, from said stack of items and delivers the separated item to a dispensing area of the vending machine, said differentiating system comprising:

a) a drive means and a threaded shaft member, said threaded shaft member connected to said drive means for rotating said threaded shaft member on a

major axis, said threaded shaft member mounted under said support surface, with respect to said stack of items and in alignment with said slot in said support surface, said threaded shaft member adapted to be received in a port means;

b) a differentiator means defined by a base member, a head member, a mounting means, a bias means and a means for stabilizing said base member, said base member including said port means and a thread follower means, said port means adapted for receiving said threaded shaft member for mounting said differentiator means under said support surface and said thread follower means adapted for cooperating with threads of said threaded shaft for moving said differentiator means along said threaded shaft means when said threaded shaft is rotated, said means for stabilizing said base for preventing rotation of said base member with said threaded shaft member, said mounting means for mounting said head member on said base member for rotational movement of said head member on said mounting means and said bias means connected between said base member and said head member for urging said head member to an angular orientation with respect to said support surface and said base member ~~further~~

includes an adjustable stop means for limiting said angular orientation of said head member; and

c) said threaded shaft member received in said port of said base member for positioning said head member mounted on said base member in said slot of said support surface so that a first end of said head member extends through said slot when said head member is urged into angular orientation by said bias means.

17. (Currently Amended) A differentiating system for a vending machine as in Claim 16 ~~18~~ wherein threads of said threaded shaft member are defined by dual threads cut in a section of a surface of said threaded shaft and said section is defined by turn-around threads at each end of said section.

18. (Original) A differentiating system for a vending machine as in Claim 17 wherein said drive means is a unidirectional motor.

19. (Currently Amended) A differentiating system for a vending machine as in Claim 16 ~~18~~ wherein threads of said threaded shaft are defined by a single thread extending substantially along a length

of said threaded shaft and said threaded follower is threads cut in a surface of said port means.

20.(Original) A differentiating system as in Claim 19 and in which said drive means is a bidirectional, rotary drive means.

21.(Currently Amended) A differentiating system for a vending machine as in Claim 16 ~~17~~ and further including a source of power connected to a ~~said~~ reversible drive means through a three position switch means for driving said reversible drive means in a ~~said~~ first rotational direction in a first position, driving said reversible drive means in a ~~said~~ second rotational direction in a second position and for stopping said rotational drive means in a third position; and

an override switch means defined by a presence detector which is defined by an arm rotatably mounted under said support surface, with a protraction means coupled to one end of said arm and extending through a port in said support surface into a chamber holding said stack of items and a bias means for urging said protraction means into said chamber, and a contact means at a second end of

said arm, said contact means having a closed position and an open position, said open position for preventing initiation of a new cycle of said differentiating system.